

Come now, touch

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Come now, touch

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Summary

Will didn't touch anyone.

When Hannibal had first noticed, it had seemed expected for the man, who similarly avoided eye contact and any other attempt at human connection.

Notes

June 23 - | Poison |

Is it technically poison? No, but I'm counting it. It did start as poison, in my defense.

Will didn't touch anyone.

When Hannibal had first noticed, it had seemed expected for the man, who similarly avoided eye contact and any other attempt at human connection. An island unto himself, Will had turned himself into a fortress that Hannibal was finding himself eager to scale, to break into.

It appeared separate from his general discomfort around people, however. Hannibal needled the man when they first met, and was rewarded with eye contact, a thing that Will gave more and more during their meetings. Similarly, he had dropped some of his walls in regards to Hannibal. He'd allowed Hannibal into his home, to watch his dogs, to pry into his brain during their sessions.

But no touching was allowed. The single time Hannibal had attempted it, moving behind Will's back with the intention of laying a hand on his shoulder, Will had flinched away so hard he'd knocked several books off of his shelves. Will had left quickly after, and sent a text message apologizing for the reaction and requesting Hannibal respect personal space an hour later.

After that, Hannibal took to watching Will more, noting how he interacted with the people around him. He didn't touch anyone, shied away from even going near them. His dogs he touched, stroking their fur, allowing them to lick his hands and face. There was something different about them, perhaps the simple fact they were animals, loyal and dumb, that made Will feel safe enough to touch them. Hannibal wondered if it was simple loneliness, compounded since childhood, that had led to Will's aversion, or some deeper trauma. He idly planned the best way to uncover it either way, as he kneaded the lungs he planned to use for dinner. Deciphering the lovely riddle that was Will was such a fascinating pursuit.

His staunch aversion to contact made Hannibal want to bring into crowds, to see if Will would allow himself to be buffeted by the masses, or weave between them with that grace he so rarely showed. He wondered how he'd react to the touch of a stranger, or even a touch he couldn't flee from. Would he fight? Submit? Would he shudder apart, and would that fracturing of self stem from fear or disgust or some other emotion?

Inviting him to a meal would be another way of getting closer to the man, but Will seemed as avoidant of that as he was of touch. Even that first breakfast, delivered by hand in that motel room in Minnesota, had barely had a bite taken out of it before Will was apologizing, citing that he felt slightly under the weather, and pressing the lid closed on the bowl. He hadn't accepted any other attempt of Hannibal's to ply him with food, and if Hannibal were prone to paranoia, he'd almost suspect Will of knowing his preferred type of meat. The months since that first meal with no scrutiny or attempted arrests were a reassurance against that idea.

They were again in his office, Will pacing the length of his balcony as Hannibal watched from usual chair. He was unexpectedly captivating when struggling to piece together the minds of killers. The subtle flicks of his eyes as he thought, barely visible from the distance and angle, the way his face twisted in mimicry of the killer for just an instant before smoothing back into himself.

“This killer is using a wide variety of weapons, how are you so sure all the deaths are connected?” Hannibal asked, if only to see that gaze turned on him.

Their killer of the week was new to the craft, with ideas bigger than their means or skills. Each death was violent, the bodies discarded in abandoned buildings, the murder weapon still on the scene. The first found had used an ax, the next beaten with a hammer, the one after that suffered death from a thousand cuts from a fishing hook, the hook found sunken into the man’s empty eye socket, fishing line pulled taut between it and a ceiling beam. More detailed than the other two, more cruel. He’d taken longer to die, and been displayed more carefully, although with all the violence of the others. The fourth had been two days ago, a woman killed by blood loss caused from being shot fifty four times with a nail gun.

“He’s... playing. He wants to find his niche, like a burgeoning artist trying different mediums. Water color or charcoal, raw brutality or a design? He’ll keep trying until he finds something he likes.”

Will’s gaze was steady on him in a way he so rarely allowed himself to look at others. His wonderful, brilliant boy. He’d catch this killer within the week, that was almost certain, and then another would appear, and they’d have some new horror to discuss. He wondered what style Will would prefer, if he were forged into a killer, freed from the shackles he’d bound himself into. The question burned on his tongue, familiar, but he wouldn’t ask it. Will was so determined to be good, pushing the thought too strongly was sure to send him running. He needed coaxing, a slow and steady approach that, if done correctly, he’d barely notice until he trusted Hannibal completely, and was his in his entirety.

He’d invited Hannibal over to dinner in an attempt to stave off the man’s clear desire to have him at his table. He couldn’t exactly tell Hannibal the real reason he avoided it with such determination, but he still enjoyed the man’s company, and wanted to make up for the constant rejection in some way.

He knew his food wasn’t going to be nearly as good as Hannibal’s, at least to the man’s palate. He could cook a fish a dozen different ways, but expect him to know what half the things Hannibal used in his cooking were and he’d fail immediately. It didn’t help that he couldn’t taste anything past the rot of his food, strong enough that the first time he’d had it, he’d had to plead off with an excuse of illness. It had been... unexpected, to say the least, to feel the meat rot in his mouth as it touched his lips.

It would have been a terrible idea to mention it, though. He’d flounder himself liking Hannibal, despite their rocky meeting, or maybe because of it. It was almost fun to match wits with someone, and it was so rare to find someone who could parry so well. If he’d confronted the man about the human meat in his food, Hannibal almost certainly would have moved to silence him. Kill him or capture him or just try to convince him he was somehow mistaken, his intention wouldn’t have mattered. He’d have put his hands on Will’s skin, and then Will would have lost Hannibal before they had the chance to become friends. And they were friends now.

He'd considered turning in, of course, but he'd been distracted by the Hobbs case, and then Hannibal was adopting them a daughter, and anyway, he'd grown accustomed to death as a child, and between his own quirks and his job, a cannibal as a friend hardly seemed the oddest thing to happen to him.

Hannibal watched as he played the food, hearty and simple, and brought it over to the table. The dogs were scattered around the living room, too well trained to try begging, even with a guest over.

"This is delicious, Will. Did you catch this fish yourself?"

Will nodded, trying to shake his sense of awkwardness. Hannibal had dressed down, wearing a red sweater and tan pants, and it was odd seeing him look so human, so normal.

He rambled about the stream near his house, and the fishing lures he made himself. Hannibal asked questions at every lull, or would switch the conversation, telling Will about some art exhibit or charity event he had gone to or was planning to go to. It was nice, to have a conversation without death or murder or motives. He enjoyed this version of Hannibal, his genuine interest in art and the creations of others.

If things were different, if he had nothing holding him back, if he was normal, he thought he would have liked to become closer to Hannibal. The man would probably love whisking his dates to operas or art exhibits, showing them off and staking a claim all at once. He could eat his food, whether or not he knew the truth of it, and enjoy it. There would be no rot filling the inside of his mouth, just the burst of flavor that Hannibal worked so hard on. He'd seen Hannibal's desire to touch him, even as just a friend. He wondered how that would translate to a relationship.

Even his friendship with Hannibal was far more than he'd ever had before. Maybe, even in that other world, he'd shy from a romance, terrified of losing Hannibal, just as he was for an entirely different reason.

He cleared the plates, and Hannibal revealed a little cake he had made and hidden in Will's fridge. Chocolate, with a filled center. He cut them both slices, and Will found himself staring at it, the dark filling melting out of it like blood from a wound. It would taste of rot. Hannibal wouldn't be able to resist, and it would coat the back of his throat with the feeling of congealed, rotting blood.

There was an endless moment, staring at that cake, feeling the weight of Hannibal's eyes on him, both of them frozen in place. Waiting for the other to move, to continue the motions of the night that had come so easy just moments ago.

The shattering of the window was almost a relief.

The moment ended, both of them slipping instantly into awareness. There was a rock the size of a fist now in his living room. Someone had thrown it at the window, someone was out there in the dark. They glanced at each other. Hannibal would base his next actions on Will, and Will wanted very badly for this to not ruin anything.

Will whistled sharply to his dogs, and they all raced up the stairs, out of danger. Even Winston followed, and he'd thank that wonderfully intelligent dog later with all the treats he could want for picking up on training he'd barely received.

Will stalked to his back door, eyes on the darkness visible through the window. Hannibal remained a steady ghost at his back, far enough away that he could ignore him without fear of him reaching out to touch.

The door slammed inwards before he could reach it, and he was being tackled to the floor by a blurred shape. The man was big, larger than him, and wearing covering clothes. The killer who'd torn apart all those people. The clothes meant he was still fighting.

The floor slamming into his back forced the air out of his lungs, and Will was still trying to recover when he saw Hannibal above them, scalpel in hand. It wouldn't do much, and certainly not before the man started hitting Will hard enough to leave him bloody and broken. He was already readying his fists to do just that, still pinning Will with his body.

Hannibal enjoyed talking about paths, instinct and destiny and the choices of man. Will rarely enjoyed acting on instinct, it left him feeling far too vulnerable, the action a reveal of his deepest self, one he seldom let see the light. This though, was instinct, savage and true.

He reached up, locking his hands around the man's pale throat, and squeezed. The flesh softened under his hands, discoloring gray and bruised. The man's eyes widened, and he started screaming, clawing at Will's hands, but touching his wrists just causes the man's hands to rot as well, skin sloughing off to reveal deadened muscle, blood flaking away, already dry. He snarled, pushing the man off of him, switching their positions so Will was the one leaning over him, hands still tight on his neck.

They sunk into the graying flesh, the rot spreading outward and inward, down his chest and up to twist his jaw. His screaming became choked as his vocal cords rotted, and then his mouth hung open, muscles too rotted to close it. His eyes still thrashed, though, and his body twitched. Alive, even as rot overtook his body, and feeling every moment of it.

The vertebrae of his spine crumbled under Will's fingers, and then his hands were balled into fists against the hardwood of his home, coated in the flaky dust of dead skin. He was panting slightly, mouth still curled in a snarl.

Metal clattered, and he whipped backwards to stare near wild eyed at Hannibal. He'd set the scalpel down on his kitchen counter.

They stared at each other for a moment, both waiting to see if the other attacked. Will stood slowly, hands loose at his sides, and Hannibal remained in the kitchen.

"I believe you failed to mention a potential reason for your aversion to touch in our last session, my dear Will." Hannibal glanced at the body at Will's feet with barely disguised awe.

His cannibal liked him vicious, apparently. Interesting.

“Didn’t think this was one a therapy session would help with, doctor Lecter.” He’d have to rot the rest of the body now, vacuum the remains. Less showy than Hannibal, apparently, but also fairly effective.

Hannibal tilted his head slightly, glancing imperceptibly between Will and the body.

“How many have you killed before him?” He asked.

Will shrugged, a more genuine grin tugging at his lips now. It was odd, being open about himself. He rarely allowed understanding of himself to pass beyond the moments of terror when the person felt their body began to decay, and knew he was the one doing it. The recognition of the predator realizing it was now prey. “Less than you, more than this guy.” He nudged the killers body with his shoed foot dispassionately.

“Is it always defense?”

“Trying to build a profile? I’m not sure Jack would believe ‘used magic hands to dispose of bodies’ even from me.”

Hannibal shook his head. “I’m curious about you, Will. I was long before this particular revelation, and I find myself quite distracted by questions I want to ask. You may tell me to cease at any time, and I will try my best to abide, but…”

“But you’re the type of person driven by curiosity. Fine.” Will went to run at his face before realizing they were still gray with dust. He shook his head instead. “Not always defense, but mostly. It’s only people, all people, all the time, yes, even you. Had it since I can remember, and I’m the only one I know with it. Happy?”

Hannibal nodded, clearly wanting to ask more questions but restraining himself. Instead, he moved closer, changing his angle so he could watch both Will and the body as Will turned back to it.

The rot spread across it faster now that he was already dead. Less to work against, maybe. The skin frayed and blackened, months and years of rot happening in moments. The clothes remained, but they were streaked as if with ash, any sweat left on the clothes soaking in the dust left behind after the rot swept through.

A vacuum, a dustpan, and a trash bag later, and the only sign of the man was the broken window, and cold air seeping through it.

Will glanced back at Hannibal, who had been watching in near rapture the entire time.

“What do you want, Hannibal? I won’t be a toy for you, and I can’t get close.” He wanted Hannibal. He’d wanted something of the man, something from the man, since he’d first seen him.

“I want whatever you are willing to give, Will. I would have everything. I would offer the same in return.”

Will wondered what it would be to press his bare skin along Hannibal's, to feel his fleeting warmth before the skin turned cold and soft with rot. He wondered if Hannibal would have that same expression, like he was witnessing something holy, even as he decayed. He wondered what it would be to exist alongside Hannibal, to live and kill and revel together.

He thought Hannibal might burn to the touch, a bonfire heat, a sun-bright touch that would burn him to ashes as surely as his touch made a waste of Hannibal. A mixing of ashes, a unity formed from death.

There was only ever one choice, with Hannibal. He followed his instinct, wild and joyous. He wondered what everything would look like, would feel like. He wanted to see Hannibal bathed in it, glorious and alive. He wanted to be there to see it and feel it and know it.

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